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Letter dated 2 July 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of the Niger and Spain to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour to write to you regarding the Third International Meeting Africa-Spain "Women for a Better World", held in Niamey on 12 and 13 May 2008.

The meeting was organized by the Network of Women for a Better World, an initiative launched by several African Governments and institutions together with the Government of Spain, with the aim of promoting development projects that may contribute to the advancement of women in Africa.

As was the case with the previous gatherings of the Network of Women for a Better World — held in Maputo (2006) and Madrid (2007) — the meeting of Niamey provided an opportunity for exchanging experiences and proposing ideas in order to promote a wider participation of women in areas such as education, politics, culture, justice, the economy, media or social movements, thus contributing to the development of the African continent.

The result of these debates has been reflected in the document of conclusions of the meeting, the Niamey Declaration, enclosed with this letter in its English, French and Spanish versions (see annex). We request that it be distributed to Member States as a document of the General Assembly, in connection with item 63 of its agenda.

(*Signed*) Aboubacar Ibrahim **Abani**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Niger

(*Signed*) Juan Antonio **Yáñez-Barnuevo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Spain

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Annex to the letter dated 2 July 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of the Niger and Spain to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

Women for a Better World: Niamey Declaration

We, women of Africa and Spain participating in the *3rd Meeting of Women for a Better World* held in Niamey on 12 and 13 May 2008, distinguished representatives in the areas of politics, education, culture, justice, provision of basic social services, the economy, the media, parliaments, development agencies, international relations, and social and citizens' movements;

Aware of the fact that the development and future of Africa is directly linked to the empowerment of its women and respect for their rights;

Giving continuity to the 2006 and 2007 Declarations of Mozambique and Madrid on women and development;

Recognizing the advances made over these two years in promoting this joint initiative;

Determined to establish and promote new opportunities for cooperation, networking and information sharing through ongoing and future African and Spanish initiatives;

Committed to ensuring compliance with the agreements reached by our respective governments, through regional and international instruments, on the goals of equity, development, and peace:

Wish to declare our firm commitment to making this new Declaration an effective instrument serving the agenda of women's issues in Africa. We will thus contribute to the consolidation of all women's rights and to mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies, in line with the international commitments made in the CEDAW Declaration; the Beijing Platform for Action; United Nations Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security; the Declaration of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth Session; the Millennium Development Goals; and the African Union's Protocol on the Rights of Women and its Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality.

We, the women participating in this Third Meeting, hereby declare:

- That the agenda we have built during these years requires the focusing and coordination of efforts and proposals. This makes it important to move forward with a political agenda that is shared by governments, public and private institutions, civil society, and economic and social actors, all of which are key sectors for the development of a society.

- That good governance is a prerequisite for the development of a women's rights agenda.

- That laws and policies alone will not bring about more gender equality, unless they are combined with enforcement, specific programmes, and proper resource allocation.

- That for women to be aware of their full potential in the economic, social and political spheres, the practice of pernicious customs must be eliminated.

- That women's role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention must be recognized and supported, including the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

- That it is essential to support African civil society and women's networks to strengthen the promotion of economic, political and cultural rights.

- That the right to access posts of political and social responsibility and decision-making, is not just a right of all citizens, but rather an element that contributes to strengthening states and democracies, prioritizing women's problems in national political agendas.

- That to achieve the shared aim of promoting the wellbeing of African societies and to guarantee the rights, development and autonomy of women, the international community, the United Nations, and all multilateral agencies and bodies must be actively present.

- That, according to recent findings by the Spanish Government on healthcare systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, as part of its cooperation programmes, health promotion, and especially the reduction of infant and maternal mortality, should be a priority of their governments, as well as promoting initiatives for full compliance with sexual and reproductive rights.

- That Africa's economic development is very closely linked to training women through capacity building, integrating the social dimension into the economic agenda, supporting formal and informal economic activities and employment with rights in keeping with international labour regulations, and providing the chance for women to set up their own businesses.

- That it is essential to ensure women's access to resources, land, education, training, credit and market opportunities, because food security and proper nutrition for the entire population depend on them.

HENCE, WE HEREBY RESOLVE:

1. We shall develop, over the course of 2008, the Annual Action Plan of the Network of Spanish and African Women, approved by the Executive Committee and endowed with 1 million dollars, with which we shall put into effect actions supporting international campaigns against gender violence through women's organisations, joint actions to train educators in the areas of citizenship, peace and gender issues, and opening a debate between Spanish and African women's organizations through the Network's website.

2. With the aim of strengthening public policies for equality in African countries, Spain will take the lead, together with the United Nations, in creating a Multidonor Fund, through UNIFEM, for the promotion and financing of these gender equality policies.

3. We agree to establish, within the framework of the Fourth Meeting of Women for a Better World, an annual forum of African and Spanish women parliamentarians, who will promote new laws and regulations aiming to abolish abusive practices that violate women's rights.

4. We shall sign an Agreement with regional economic institutions, including the African Development Bank, before the end of 2008, which will make available five million dollars to fund African women's entrepreneurial initiatives and self-employment projects.

5. We commit to organizing, before the next Women's Meeting, an International Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health, with the participation of UNFPA and UNIFEM, governments, and Spanish and African women's organizations.

6. In 2009, we shall open a Training Centre in Mali, funded by the Spanish government, to provide capacity building for African governments and civil society. Moreover, the feasibility of similar centres in other African countries shall be studied.

7. We shall reach agreements between universities and scientific and cultural institutions to facilitate and promote cooperation in this area. Furthermore, through the Aulas Cervantes initiative, programmes for teaching Spanish shall be set up in several African universities. Specifically, before the next Meeting, one will open in Senegal, and subsequently in other countries.

8. Within the framework of the forthcoming Madrid International Contemporary Art Fair (ARCO 2009), priority shall be given to the presence of African women artists. In addition, to further Africa's cultural industry, an International Meeting of African Women Artists shall be organised in Casa Africa.

9. To strengthen democracy, contribute to better governance, and support democracy building in African countries, we shall develop, through the Women's Network and other African and Spanish institutions, courses to train managers and social, political and economic leaders for African governments and civil society.

10. In forthcoming months, we shall launch an Action Plan on Food Security and Global Warming and the Gender Dimensions of Climate Change and the Environment in Africa, proposed during the forum on this subject held in Niamey on 11 May 2008, focusing specially on women's projects.

All these commitments shall be evaluated at the Fourth Meeting, to be held in Namibia in 2009, and which will be continued at the Fifth Meeting in Valencia (Spain) in 2010, coinciding with the Spanish Presidency of the European Union.